[Judge J. H. Yarborough]

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Winnsboro, S. C. 6/25/38 trans 390572 CHESTER COUNTY JUDGE J. H. YARBOROUGH

(white) 82 YEARS OLD

James Henry Yarborough, Probate Judge of Chester County, South Carolina, is serving out his second term of four years. He is a candidate for re-election in the democratic primary this summer to begin his third term, Jan. 1, 1939. His office is in the courthouse at Chester, S. C.

“Well, old fellow, if you are going to write something about me, I want you to start off by saying that in my long life I have never been worth, in dollars and cents, above my liabilities, as much as one hundred dollars.

“I am descended from the earliest settlers around the Jenkinsville and Monticello sections of Fairfield County. My father was William Burns Yarborough, a lover of nature, stars, flowers, birds, and trees. He was full of sentiment and high ideals, but he was not very practical in looking after and increasing his substance of material things. My mother, before marriage, was Elizabeth James, but I hasten to assure you that she was not related to Jesse James, the bandit, nor his family.

“I was a tousled-head boy when the Yankees reached Jenkinsville and our old home, after crossing at Freshley's Ferry on Broad River. The invading army confiscated everything, such as corn, wheat, oats, peas, fodder, hay, and all smokehouse supplies. My recollection is that they came in February, 1865. I was then a freckled-face boy nine years old, and I fought like fury to retain about a pack of corn-on-the-cob that the Yankee's horses had left in a trough unconsumed.

“I remember, too, how grief stricken I was when a Yankee soldier killed my little pet dog. He had a gun with a bayonet fixed on the muzzle. He began teasing me about the corn. The little dog ran between my legs and growled and barked at the soldiers whereupon with an oath the soldier unfeelingly ran the bayonet through the neck of the faithful little dog and killed him.

“When that cruel war was over, it would have been wiser had the whites and ex-slaves been left to their own resources and inventions, to work out their future welfare. There was no lack of affection or loyalty on the part of the Negro, nor was there a lack of love and an enlightened appreciation of self-interest upon the part of the whites. Things might have been different if suffrage had been granted gradually. But with immediate equal suffrage, or the right to vote, came the carpetbagger with his preachments of social equality and the tantalizing bag of tricks to get for every Negro 40 acres of land and a mule. The Negroes were credulous and believed all the absurdities the knaves told them. The result was an inevitable curse for the Negro and lots of trouble for the white people. It ended only when Hampton was elected in 1876. Hampton is still my hero and a man of greatest worth in the annals of South Carolina.

“I went to school at the Old Broad River Academy. At that time I was only a boy in my teens, but I wore the red shirt in the parades of the Hampton movement.

“At this period of my life, my Jenkinsville companions and I had never been around much. A visit to the county seat, Winnsboro, was a great event in our lives, and we regarded a visit to Columbia and the State Fair then just about like you or I would look upon a visit to London or Berlin now. I remember, with intense amusement, when Alley McMeekin, Glenn W. Ragsdale, 3 Henry Parr, Charley Chappell, and myself, all country bumpkins, went to the State Fair. While on the grounds, we smoked Virginia Cheroots continuously. We attracted attention, I tell you! As we passed a coterie of well dressed distinguished gentlemen, of the character of Col. Richard Singleton, we were asked where we lived.

Alley McMeekin was the most talkative one of our crowd. He removed the cheroot from his mouth, lifted his hat, and with a low bow to the sedate gentleman, replied, 'Sir, I live about 300 yards from Uncle Joel McMeekin's spring.' We teased Alley about this piece of grandiloquence forty years afterward. Poor fellow, he died last summer.

“The next place I went to school was Furman University, Greenville, S. C. Leaving there, I taught school at Spring Hill, Lexington County; next, at St. Johns, in Newberry County. School teaching is a more or less quiet existence, and, to better my physical being, I went to Leona, Texas. But cow punching was too strenuous, so I returned to Jenkinsville and accepted a clerkship with Jno. S. Swygert & Co., at Dawkins, S. C. At night, while holding this position, I borrowed law books from my friends, E. B. & G. W. Ragsdale of the Winnsboro bar, read law, and was admitted by the State Supreme Court to practice the profession the year of the earthquake, 1886.

“I soon lost interest in law and tired of trying to save the hides of criminals and of acquiring dubious settlements in civil cases for more or lose selfish litigants. I felt a call to the ministry and went to the Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky. Having attained my degree in theology there, I received a call at once to the Little River Baptist Church in Fairfield County.

“One of the most beautiful spots in my memory is the ten spot with a golden background that Mr. William D. Stanton gave me after I preached my 4 first sermon. I labored in the ministry forty-five years and found it rich in spiritual compensations.

“I married Lily Inez Harden. Our children are Mrs. J. A. Riley, whose husband is head of the Sand Hill Experiment Station; Mrs. E. H. Pressley, whose husband is associate professor of astronomy in the University of Arizona; Dr. James H. Yarborough, Jr., veterinarian, in Miami, Florida; Mrs. D. J. Leslie, Rock Hill, S. C.; W. G. Yarborough, Assistant County Agent at Edgefield, S. C.; and Mrs. S. H. Harden, Jr.

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“Our neighbors, before and immediately after the War Between the States, were the Stantons, the Rabbs, the Alstons, the Piersons, the Glenns, and the Ragsdales. There was a great deal more visiting among country folks then than there is nowadays. And visiting then meant an all day of it. A man would have his carriage and take his whole family to visit a neighbor. You asked me about the children? Oh, you see there was no public school. Usually rich folks had tutors in their homes. The tutor was left in custody of the home, but the children were usually taken on the visit. On arrival, the ladies and children were conducted to the parlor and the men into the dining or sitting room. Wine and cake were served in the parlor, and a decanter of brandies was passed around in the dining room.

“After such reception, the men mounted horseback and rode over the plantation on an inspection of the crops and methods of cultivation. The guest was supposed to observe and make suggestions of improvement and tell of the methods he had tried and found successful on different kinds of soils. While the host and his male guest were thus occupied, chickens were being slain - never less than six - in the kitchen. Suspended in the wide fireplace in the kitchen was a large iron pot in which was boiled a sizable, well-cured, country ham. This 5 was the prerequisite of a sumptuous plantation dinner.

“On the dinner tables one could always expect a ham, two plates of fried chicken, a large chicken pie, vegetables of the season, a pan of candied sweet potatoes, rice, and several different kinds of pies and custards. The dessert most likely served was boiled custard and pound cake. Layer cake, I don't remember. I think it came into vogue after the war.

“Yes, sir, great changes have taken place in family life since my youthful days. Parents were more revered then, and they also exercised more authority. Women occupied a more elevated sphere. A boy had to get permission from the parent before he could pay his addresses to a girl. This would give the father a chance to inquire about the fitness of the young man who was aspiring to be his son-in-law.

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“Our slave quarters were substantial log houses. They had two rooms, with a chimney in the middle, and two windows that were closed against rain or wind by wooden shutters on hinges. Slaves were humanely treated and well fed and clothed. They received the same medical treatment as our family and by the same physician, Dr. David Glenn.

“By the way, Dr. Glenn was a noble man. He was married three times. In those days married women had very little rights in regard to property. When a woman of property married, the property became the husbands. Dr. Glenn married Miss Sarah F. Mobley, a daughter of a rich planter, John Mobley. When she died, Dr. Glenn returned the property to her father, even to the jewelry and trinkets.

“Churches were the centers of social influence and the standard of moral excellence and good citizenship in my youth. Roads? In rainy weather they were impassable. In dry weather every traveler had a linen duster to slip 6 on over his or her clothes to keep off the dust of the highways.

“The great man of my youth were Dr. J. C. Furman, Dr. James H. Carlisle, Dr. Moffatt Grier, and Prof. Means Davis, all leaders in education; General John Bratton as a soldier and private citizen; and General Wade Hampton as the State's political redeemer.

“I can't tell you about how ladies dressed in those days. It was a question then and a mystery now, how they got about in any comfort or pleasure. A young man in those days, to be in the swim, must have a horse and buggy, a long-tailed broadcloth coat, a white or buff vest, a pair of French calfskin boots, costing not less than $16.00, and a pair of kid gloves. To be real swell, all this was topped by a tall, shiny, beaver hat.

“I conclude by saying it was a shame in those days for a man to part his hair in the middle or shovel food in his mouth on the end of his knife blade.”